

CENTRAL INTELLIGENCE AGENCY

415069

INFORMATION REPORT

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COUNTRY	Bulgaria	REPORT	25X1
SUBJECT	Bulgarian Railway Information	DATE DISTR.	31 March 1954
DATE OF INFO.		NO. OF PAGES	6
PLACE ACQUIRED		REQUIREMENT NO.	RD
		REFERENCES	25X1

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Information

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1. A widespread renovation plan is under way for the entire Bulgarian railway network. This renovation is aimed at radically changing the general routes of the main communication lines and is obviously part of a more comprehensive Soviet plan to effect the coordination of the systems of all the satellite countries of southeastern Europe. Until now, in fact, all the major railway lines ran generally in a northwest-southeast direction, according to plans suggested in the past by geographical, political, economic, and military considerations. The new plan, on the other hand, which obviously answers Soviet requisites, would call for communication lines to run in a northeast-southwest direction.
2. Specifically, insofar as the Bulgarian railway network is concerned, it is easy to note from the outline below how this network is developing particularly to the north by joining 14 ports on the Danube with the Varna (now Stalin)-Sofia line, and to the east with the construction of entirely new railway lines in order to raise from two to four the railway connections which Sofia has with the Black Sea ports of Burgas and Varna, thus ensuring a valuable safeguard in the vicinity of the Turkish frontier, as well as a doubling of traffic routes from the Black Sea ports to the Yugoslav frontier.

MAIN STANDARD-GAUGE RAILWAY LINESDragoman-Sofia-Pazardzhik-Plovdiv-Dimitrovgrad-Maritsa-Svilengrad Railway Line

3. This is the main international line which connects the Bulgarian capital with Yugoslavia and Turkey. Since 1945, this whole line has been renovated with a reinforced roadbed and it has long stretches of double track and a traffic capacity which at present is close to 40 pairs of trains per day.

25 YEAR RE-REVIEW

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Vidin-Aleksandrovo-Brusartsyi-Vratsa-Sofia Railway Line

4. This line joins Bulgaria to Rumania, crossing the Danube at Calafat and connecting with the Craiova-Bucharest railway line. This line is at present being reinforced with a stronger roadbed between Vidin and Vratsa. From Vratsa to Sofia the line has been entirely renovated, reinforced, and electrified. Up to now, this is the only electric railway line in Bulgaria. In the first portion of this line (Vidin-Vratsa) this line has a very limited traffic capacity which amounts to approximately 20 pairs of trains per day, while in the second section (Vratsa-Sofia) the traffic capacity has been more than doubled.

Sofia-Mezdra-Cherven Bryag-Pleven-Levski-Turnovo-Popovo-Shumen- Gara Kaspichan-Provadiya-Varna Railway Line

5. This is the longest railway line in Bulgaria, and joins Sofia with Varna. The first portion of this line runs along the same tracks as the line described in Para. 4 above. The second section (Mezdra-Luskovets) is at present being reinforced by substituting a light roadbed with a heavy roadbed. The third section (Turnovo-Varna) is not in good condition and traffic is still very limited. Traffic capacity amounts to 40 pairs of trains per day in the first section, 30 per day in the second section, and only 20 per day in the third section of this line. It is, however, planned to strengthen the entire line since all traffic coming by land from Rumania, across the Danube and all traffic coming from the Black Sea through Varna, will be using this line.

Sofia-Dolno Kamartsyi-Pirdop-Klisura-Karlovo-Kazanluk-Stara Zagora-Yambol-Karnobat-Burgas Railway Line

6. The first portion of this line (Dolno Kamartsyi-Klisura) is of entirely new construction. Work on it started in 1948 and was completed in the summer of 1952. This line has a strong roadbed and includes large sections of double-track line. Certain portions are now in the process of completion, such as: a reinforced concrete bridge, constructed along a curve, which crosses the valley of the Struma River, next to Klisura; an overpass of the railway over the Sofia-Karlovo highway; a tunnel approximately five kilometers long, under Kosnitsa Pass; a second tunnel under Gububits Pass.

7. The second portion of the Karlovo-Burgas railway line, which included curves with a limited radius and followed a very winding route, has been entirely reinforced and these curves have been altered to allow for the transit of special railway cars which are much longer than the standard-type ones and are used for transporting tanks.

8. The entire line has been in normal operation since 1 April 1953. It has a traffic capacity which averages about 30 pairs of trains per day along the entire line.

Sofia-Dimitrovo-Radomir-Dupnitsa-Gorna Dzhumaya-Kulata (N 41-23, E 23-22) Railway Line

9. This line joins Sofia with the Greek border and with the city of Petrich. Only the first portion of this line is at present in good condition and has regular traffic; that is the Sofia-Dimitrovo section which was completely revised and on which the roadbed was strengthened. This section serves chiefly for connecting the industrial center of Pernik with the mines and has a traffic capacity of approximately 60 pairs of trains per day. With an aim to decreasing the amount of traffic on this line, work was started several years ago on another more direct railway line from Sofia to Pernik. However, while work advanced rather rapidly as far as Bankya, it had to be slowed down here because of the friability of the soil.

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10. Another shorter route joins Sofia to the south and to Radomir, and from here to the Yugoslav frontier and to Kyustendil, whence a small section runs to Gyushevo, only a few kilometers from the Yugoslav frontier, on the Sofia-Skopje road.
11. The Radomir-Kulata section, on the Greek border, is at present in very poor condition, has no ballast and has a traffic capacity of barely 10 pairs of trains per day. It should be noted that just before the frontier the line branches off and one section terminates at Petrich.

STANDARD-GAUGE SECONDARY LINESOryakhovo-Cherven Bryag Railway Line

12. This line connects the Danube port of Oryakhovo with the main Pleven-Sofia line. It has a light roadbed along its entire length and has a limited traffic capacity. It runs through the villages of Altimir, Byala Slatina, and Knezha and is 60 kilometers in length.

Nikopol-Yasen Railway Line

13. This line connects the Danube port of Nikopol with the Pleven-Sofia line and on the other side of the Danube it joins with the Rumanian railway terminal of Turnu-Magurele, with branches to Rosiorii-de-Vede, Craiova, Pitesti, and Bucharest. This line has a light roadbed and a traffic capacity limited to approximately 15 pairs of trains per day.

Svishtov-Levski Railway Line

14. This line connects the Danube port of Svishtov with the Turnovo-Pleven-Sofia main line. At Buzhurluk a line branches off to Belene, on the Danube. This line is of limited importance with a poor roadbed and a traffic capacity of only a few trains per day.

Ruse-Lyaskovets (N 43-06, E 25-42) Railway Line

15. This line is the chief link between Bulgaria and Rumania, and, across the Danube, it joins with the Rumanian city of Giurgiu whence it runs directly to Bucharest. The roadbed on this line was recently reinforced and the traffic capacity was increased to approximately 30 pairs of trains per day. This line is approximately 90 kilometers in length and runs through the towns of Trstenik (N 43-41, E 25-52), Byala, Dolna Oryakhovitsa, and Turnovo.

Ruse-Varna Railway Line

16. This line directly connects the port of Ruse with the port of Varna and joins the Sofia-Varna line at Novi Pazar. Work is in progress at present on this line to strengthen the roadbed and to increase its traffic capacity which now amounts to 20 trains per day.

Silistra-Varna Railway Line

17. This line connects Bulgaria to Rumania, over the Danube, terminating in Rumanian territory in the city of Calarasi. This line connects with the Ruse-Varna line at Gara Samuil. The Silistra-Gara Samuil section is of recent construction, has a reinforced roadbed and a traffic potential which could reach as high as 30 pairs of trains per day.

Kardam-Dobrich-Varna Railway Line

18. This line is the easternmost line in Bulgaria and connects the port of Varna to the port of Constantza. This is, however, a secondary line, with a light road-

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bed generally in poor condition. Work is in progress for reinforcing this line, since it constitutes a strategic line of a certain importance. Up to the present time, however, not much has been done.

Varna-Burgas Railway Line

19. This line joins the two main ports of Bulgaria on the Black Sea. It connects with the Sofia-Burgas line at Karnobat. It has a roadbed along the entire line and is reinforced by means of several masonry works so that at present its traffic capacity amounts to approximately 30 pairs of trains per day.

Turinovo-Podkovo Railway Line

20. This line runs through Dryanovo, Tryavna, Dubovo, Stara Zagora, Mikhaylovo, Kürdzhali, and Momchilgrad, cutting vertically through all of central Bulgaria and terminating a few kilometers from the Greek frontier. This line at present is not much in use, but it was constructed chiefly for strategic reasons, behind the fortifications line which runs along the Turkish and Greek frontiers.

Pazardzhik-Razlog-Dobrinishte Railway Line

21. This is a strictly secondary line which branches off the Sofia-Svilengrad main line and connects several areas of southern Bulgaria.

LINES UNDER CONSTRUCTION

Vratsa-Altimir (N 43-32, E 23-48) Railway Line

22. Work started on this line in 1950 and is now far advanced and it is believed that the line will start operating within the year 1953. After the completion of this new line the length of the Oryakhovo-Sofia section which at present runs through Cherven Bryag, will be cut about in half.

Popovo-Razgrad-Isperikh Railway Line

23. This line is aimed at strengthening the lines of direct communications between Bulgaria and Rumania. Work on this line is near completion and it is felt that the new section will be opened in the spring of 1954. With the construction of this section, which connects with the Sofia-Varna line as well as with a portion of the Siliстра-Varna line, and with the possibility of a branch starting at Razgrad and running to the Danube port of Ruse, the systematization of the railway network of northeastern Bulgaria is completed.

Maritsa-Topolovgrad-Elkhovo-Grudovo-Burgas Railway Line

24. Work has barely started on this line at the two terminal sections: Maritsa-Topolovgrad, and Burgas-Grudovo. This line will duplicate the Plovdiv-Burgas line, with connections for Stara Zagora and Yambol, and is obviously being built for strategic reasons, since it constitutes the closest line to the Turkish-Bulgarian frontier.

Slataritsa-Elena Railway Line

25. This line is of local importance and work is nearing completion. They provide for later continuing the Türgovishte-Burgas line, along the projected new Sofia-Varna line.

Bankya-Pernik Railway Line

26. This line has been under construction for many years, but work is proceeding slowly because of the friability of the soil. It will directly connect Sofia

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with the industrial center of Pernik.

LINES PLANNED

Dolno Zerovene (N 43-35, E 23-15)-Dolni Zibar (N 43-49, E 23-31) Railway Line

27. This line, from the river port of Dolni Zibar on the Danube, would run to Dolno Zerovene, on the Vidin-Mezdra line. This line is of local importance.

Boychinovtsi (N 43-29, E 23-19)-Kozloduy (N 43-47, E 23-42) Railway Line

28. This line also connects with the Vidin-Mezdra line and is part of a plan for strengthening communications throughout Bulgaria, with the various ports on the Danube and with Rumania.

Knyazha (N 43-30, E 24-05)-Gigen (N 43-42, E 24-29) Railway Line

29. This line will connect a possible crossing point of the Danube with the Rumanian terminus of Corabia, which is connected to Caracal, Craiova, and Bucharest.

Cherven Bryag-Teteven Railway Line

30. This may be considered a continuation to the south of a line which is to connect with the planned "Severna Podbalkanska" line, which is to join Sofia to Varna.

Nikopol-Levski (N 43-22, E 25-08)-Sukhindol (N 43-11, E 25-10)-Sevlievo Railway Line

31. This line also is part of the program for strengthening communications between northern Bulgaria and the ports of the Danube with the Rumanian railway lines on the other side of the Danube.

Tutrakan-Kubrat-Razgrad Railway Line

32. This railway line is of major importance since, opposite Tutrakan, the Rumanian river port of Oltenitsa is connected by rail with Bucharest. It should be noted that, with the construction of this line which would join with the Ruse-Varna line, the plan of reinforcement of that portion of Bulgaria immediately south of the Danube would be completed.

Silistra-Alfatar (N 43-57, E 27-18)-Tervel-Dobrich (now Tolbukhin)-Balchik Railway Line

33. This line will connect the Danube port of Silistra, which is located opposite the Rumanian railway center of Calarasi, with the seaport of Balchik and will constitute the most advanced line near the frontier of Rumanian Dobrudzha.

Asenovgrad-Khvoyna (N 41-52, E 24-40)-Chepelare (N 41-43, E 24-41) Railway Line

34. At the present time, only the Asenovgrad-Khvoyna portion of this line is being planned, which will be of local importance, but an extension is expected as far as Chepelare, in order to reach the Bulgaria-Greece frontier.

Sofia-Botevgrad-Teteven-Troyan-Gabrovo-Tryavna (N 42-52, E 25-30)-Omortag-Turgovishte Railway Line

35. The construction of this line appears to be very difficult in view of the many technical problems involved. Its layout is still being studied. This would constitute the "North Sub-Balkan Line" (Severna Podbalkanska) concerning which

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there has been so much talk and it would duplicate a portion of the Sofia-Varna line with connections for Pleven and Gorna Oryakhovitsa. It would also connect the railway terminals located to the north of the Stara Planina.

36. Many other smaller lines are being planned, but a study of the layouts shows that they involve many practical difficulties because of the orography of Bulgaria. In all these projects, however, it is easy to see how, in addition to an undoubtedly important economic-logistic plan of local importance there is also the realization of a strategic-military plan aimed at making Bulgaria an advanced bridgehead in the Balkans.

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